

ally from the original and inherent sovereignty, of the body politic, first through the antecedent decision of the people, at the ballot box, in voting for a call of a Convention, and secondly, through the ratification of its action by the subsequent vote of the people, when passing upon the new Constitution, submitted for their approval or rejection. This difference of opinion amongst Conventional Reformers, as to the source of the authority for the call of a Convention, did not, however, affect the main issue. The contest was still between the people, whether above or under the bill of rights; on the one side, and the Legislature, sheltered behind the phraseology of the 59th article, on the other. The majority principle was distinctly maintained by both divisions of the reform party; who with one accord, contended that the Constitution of Maryland, and that of the federal Government, differ in this essential particular, namely, that the latter is a special contract of confederacy, between separate and independent sovereignties, each contracting State being as fully equal to the other, as are two distinct nations, who may have formed a treaty of alliance; whereas, the former is but a rule of rights and duties, prescribed for the good government of a body politic, one and indivisible; and which though binding, until repealed, is nevertheless, at all times, of necessity, within the power of a majority of the people, unless otherwise therein expressly ordained. For myself, I do not hesitate to promulge to the world, that I never sought in the (so called) guarantees of the declaration of rights, and the non-inhibited powers of the Legislature, a sanction for an act, which I found sufficiently authorized in the republican theory of the absolute sovereignty of the people. I have ever regarded that often quoted passage of the bill of rights, in relation to the power of the people to alter or abolish their Constitution and form of government; not as a guarantee of some conceded franchise, but as a simple declaration, of a pre-existing and indefeasible attribute of sovereign power. The example of many States, at the time of the adoption of the federal Constitution, afford ample authority to satisfy my judgment. Still, upon either theory, advocated by Reformers, Maryland may be congratulated for a decided triumph over the contracted views which, during more than half a century, have retarded her political amelioration, and kept her far in the rear of many of her younger sisters of the Union. Even should no practical reforms result from the labors of the present Convention, (which of course is not supposable) still, I regard the value of the principle, now established, as great in view of the possible future, as to hold the expenses, inconveniences, and even total failure of this first attempt, however in itself deplorable, to be entirely of subordinate importance; for, Nations, unlike individuals, never die, and can afford to bide their time. What one generation loses by folly, another will reach by the wisdom of experience.

And, as Republics rarely, if ever, retrograde in opinion, as long as they preserve a healthy tone in public morals, we have every cause to hope and believe that the precedent set, in the call of the present reform Convention, will have the effect to enlarge the power of the people, in a more signal manner, hereafter. Whilst, therefore, the people yearn for the enjoyment of those salutary reforms, which right, justice and good policy call for; and although they should possibly be doomed to meet with a total or partial disappointment of their reasonable hopes, they cannot forget to console themselves with the knowledge that the great battle, in fact, was fought and won, when the Legislature, after a steady resistance of twenty years, finally promulgated, and Maryland, by an almost unanimous vote, ratified the doctrine, that the people are not enchained by the 59th Article of the Constitution. This is the entering wedge to the future. This is the key to the treasury of popular rights. With this weapon the people will be irresistible, in all future struggles for the extension of their privileges. And it is for this achievement, so full of republican destiny, that I honor and congratulate the Citizens of Maryland.

Whilst felicitating herself upon the high position, which she has attained, by the devotion and resolution of her citizens, in the maintenance of the public faith, the development